

The Ryan Speakership: Continued Obstruction or Bipartisan Progress?

For the past five years, the House has been governed by a deeply divided and dysfunctional Republican Party. Newly-elected Speaker Ryan now has a choice to make about what kind of Speaker he wants to be – does he want to add to Republicans’ record of partisanship and obstruction or work with Democrats to get things done for the American people?

Speaker Ryan has said he wants to find common ground to advance the interests of the country:

“Number one, **[we need to] get the House on working** like it was intended to work by the founders. Number two, **we need to seek common ground. We need to find common ground where we can find it to advance the nation's interest.**” [CBS Face the Nation, [11/1/15](#)]

At the same time, less than three days into his Speakership, Paul Ryan has already taken important issues off the table:

Immigration Reform: “Speaker Paul D. Ryan said in a series of televised interviews on Sunday that he would not work with the Obama administration on changing immigration policy, effectively pushing off the issue to at least 2017.” [New York Times, [11/1/15](#)]

Paid Family Leave: “New Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) on Sunday dismissed Democrats’ calls for a paid family leave law as another ‘federal entitlement,’ and said his position isn’t at odds with recent remarks that he wants to spend weekends with his young family in Wisconsin.” [The Hill, [11/1/15](#)]

And while Speaker Ryan may have ruled out comprehensive immigration reform, Members of his own party vow to continue their push for reform and are calling for a debate, which Democrats and the majority of Americans support:

“Two Central Valley Republicans say that newly selected House Speaker Paul Ryan’s decision not to focus on immigration reform while Barack Obama is president won’t stop them from trying. Reps. Jeff Denham (R-Turlock) and David Valadao (R-Hanford) have been among the most outspoken members of their party pushing for comprehensive immigration overhaul. ‘It’s time to have a full debate,’ Denham said Friday.” [Los Angeles Times, [11/3/15](#)]

In addition to immigration, there are other important, time-sensitive issues that require bipartisan action by the Congress:

- ***Export-Import Bank Reauthorization – Expired June 30, 2015***
 - This summer, Republicans shut down the Export-Import Bank for the first time in its 81-year history. The Bank provides critical financing assistance – at no cost to taxpayers – to small, medium, and large-sized U.S. businesses that helps them create jobs here at home and sell their products overseas. On October 27, the majority of House Republicans and nearly every Democrat voted to reopen the Bank and prevent more American jobs from being shipped overseas. However, some Republicans are threatening the Bank with amendments to the highway bill.

- ***Surface Transportation/Highway Trust Fund – Expires November 20, 2015***
 - Congress must act to pass a long-term highway bill so that we can adequately invest in infrastructure repairs and provide state and local governments with certainty they need to plan ahead. House Republicans have substituted the bipartisan highway bill reported out of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for the highway policy in the Senate-passed bill. However, a very large number of amendments to the bill have been filed, and it remains to be seen whether Speaker Ryan will work with us to pass a bipartisan bill out of the House.
- ***Tax Extenders – Expired December 31, 2014***
 - If Republicans don't act on a retroactive tax extenders bill, a number of tax provisions that expired at the end of last year will be unavailable to taxpayers when they file their 2015 taxes, making it harder for individuals, families, and small businesses to plan and invest, resulting in increased instability and a lack of confidence in the economy. The provisions include credits for research and development, deductions for teachers' out of pocket expenses, and credits that help the growth of renewable energy.
- ***James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act – Expired September 30, 2015***
 - Republicans let the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act expire, which provides health care to those sickened by Ground Zero toxins from the September 11, 2011 terrorist attacks.
- ***Land and Water Conservation Fund – Expired September 30, 2015***
 - Republicans let the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) – one of the nation's most successful conservation programs – expire in September. The LWCF uses a small percentage of revenue from offshore oil and gas drilling to invest in public lands and local recreation projects. No taxpayer dollars are used to fund projects, which help to support more than 6 million U.S. jobs connected with outdoor recreation.
- ***Reaching Agreement on an Omnibus Appropriations Bill – Deadline of December 11, 2015***
 - Now that Congress has ensured America will pay its bills and reached agreement on spending levels, the House should work quickly to complete an omnibus and avert another government shutdown crisis in December.
- ***FAA Reauthorization – Expires March 31, 2016***
 - Congress needs to pass a full-year Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization bill to provide Americans with a safe and reliable air transit network.